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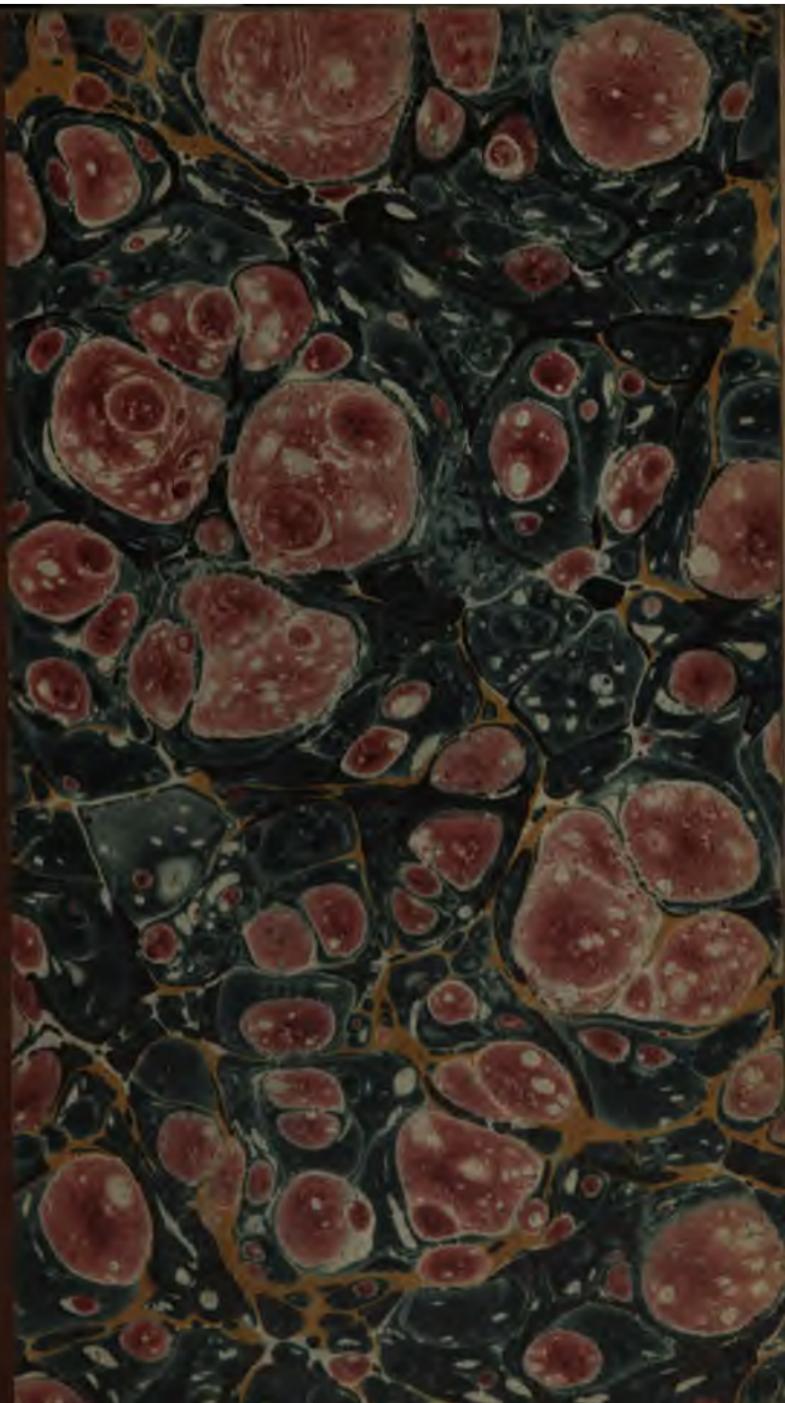
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Domestic Piety:

OR, THE

CHURCH MEMBER AT HOME.

BY THE REV. JESSE HOBSON.



DOMESTIC PIETY;

OR,

THE CHURCH MEMBER AT HOME.

AN ADDRESS

FORMING THE ANNUAL LETTER

TO THE

CHURCHES OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
ASSOCIATION.

BY THE REV. JESSE HOBSON.

REPRINTED BY REQUEST.

London:

ARTHUR HALL AND CO., PATERNOSTER ROW.

HIGH WYCOMBE: CHARLES FOYSTER.

1848.

C. FOYSTER, PRINTER, HIGH WYCOMBE.



THE following address formed the usual Annual Letter to the "Buckinghamshire Association of Baptist Churches." The subject was deemed of so much importance, that an earnest desire for a reprint in a distinct form was made. This request has been acceded to in the hope that it may act as a stimulus to Domestic Piety. It is commended to the prayerful consideration of the Church of Christ;—and under its present aspect of sad depression, it is by no means inapplicable. Were our churches blessed with additions from the families of the saints—and if *all* the members of those families were to become the followers of Jesus, we should never have a reported decrease, but a perpetually increasing flock. May the blessing of the Great Head of the Church render it productive of good.

HIGH WYCOMBE,

JULY 10TH, 1848.

DOMESTIC PIETY:

OR,

THE CHURCH MEMBER AT HOME.

We fully sympathise with the stirring words of the popular ballad, "Home, sweet Home; there is no place like Home." There are no words more thrilling, no associations more deeply interesting. It kindles a thousand bright and happy thoughts. It brings to our mind reminiscences of the past. It carries us back to childhood's years and our father's house—when no storm of life had crossed our path, and no anxious care had marred our peace: but when all was full of hope; and even now that we have passed the giddy scene of childhood, and the sportive mirth of earlier years; now that we have gathered around us the mantle of worldly occupation—engrossed by cares and anxieties—absorbed in temporal pursuits—we echo back the sentiment, "There is no place like home."

There are few, perhaps none, of the members of our Churches, without a home. He who has none for whom he cares, or who cares for him—

unloving and unloved—is lost to all the nobler and purer pleasures of life. No voice blesses him while he lives—no hand, save the hand of selfishness, smooths his pillow in sickness—and no tear is shed o'er his grave when he dies. God never intended man to be friendless. “It is not good,” He has said, “that man should be alone.” His social feelings and propensities are gratified by a kind and tender provision, and man acting upon the strong impulses of human nature, seeks, in kindred companionship, the high and noble charms of affection and attachment. To be alone and solitary, is to be sad and miserable; not that a man ever *can* be alone in the world in which we dwell; but he is to all intents in solitude, unless he is surrounded by sympathy—unless he can gather round him such as can weep when he weeps, and whose bosoms expand when he feels the thrill of ecstatic joy. Hence God, always mindful of man’s happiness, has made an ample provision for his wants—we have our homes and families. The question then arises, how can those homes be rendered blissful and those families happy?

It is very evident from the slightest observation, that every home is not a happy home; there are, we know, certain cares which will mar its peace—certain sorrows which no prudence can avert—and which, as forming a part of that line of discipline *which our Heavenly Father adopts, to prepare us*

for another and a better world, we would not wish to avoid. But we have been taught so many a lesson of love, that we are brought to the conviction amid our cares and anxieties, there can be submission, and with our sorrows and griefs, the happiness of resignation to that will which is better than ours. While uninterrupted happiness *never* can be obtained, there are mitigations to the woes of time and the griefs of earth—there is a balm to soothe our hearts, there is a hand to wipe the tear from our eyes. Where is that balm? whence flows that happiness? Wealth, with all its fancied enjoyments and luxurious plenty, responds, “It is not with me!” Friendship, bounded only by time, and limited to the life that now is, replies, “It is not with me.” Pleasure, decked in its fairest colours, and clad in forms of gaiety and mirth, answers, “It is not with me!” The balm is in Gilead, and the physician there; for “the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles (or homes) of the righteous.” “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”

The subject then, to which your intention is invited most earnestly, is the momentously important sentiment, “Domestic Religion;”—or, in other words, “The Church Member at Home.” The matter is one of extreme delicacy. Domestic scenes are often judged too sacred to be unveiled—too hallowed for the stranger to intrude; but so deeply

do we feel just now upon the subject, that we cannot but regard it as the great fountain of the Church's prosperity, and the source whence it is to be enriched. The line of remark we may adopt will, in all probability, excite painful feelings. The wounds occasioned by irreligion in the family of a Christian are very deep; the sad results of evil example are so melancholy, as to fill every heart with sorrow and every eye with tears; the neglect of discipline and restraint has brought in its train a long list of evils—while the unchecked associations of childhood, and the unbridled companionship of youth, have broken many a credulous heart and desolated many a happy home. But the very existence of such things involves the necessity of earnest appeal. If there is a wound it must not be "slightly healed." Let the past, even if full of sorrow, act as a lesson for the future, and experience, that best schoolmaster, teach us wherein lies our strength. Domestic Religion may not, and will not, avert all the calamities of life; but those which it does not prevent it will sanctify, and where it does not remove it will provide a solace and a stay.

Every situation in life has its responsibilities and duties, and none are at the same time so deeply interesting and overwhelmingly important, as those belonging to a family. To the parents is committed a trust which, in its value, mocks con-

ception and defies all language to describe. Train this child for God ; fit it for life if you will ; but place within its reach the elements of preparation for another world. “ Bring it up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ;” and let its spiritual welfare be the all-absorbing object of your desires, and the importunate subject of your prayers. There is nothing so beautiful as parental authority exercised amid the gushings of parental piety, and enforced amid the uprightness of parental consistency. The greatest honour which you can have, is not that your children may be found amongst the wealthy—the companions of the great and the lordly ; but that their names shall be inscribed in the Lamb’s book of life, and their position found among the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. Bear with us then, while we present before you two or three definite remarks of vital importance.

Domestic Piety involves the discharge of Religious Duties.—We are pre-supposing the existence of religion. The very fact that you are a church member, implies this, we know the purest communion has never excluded the hypocrite ; but we presume that to you the Saviour is precious—that you feel an interest in the spread of his kingdom,—and that you desire for others the possession of the same inestimable treasure. We do not wish to check your sympathy for others. The Religion of Christ sets no bounds to our efforts,

and provides no limit to our love. The commission of our Master has devolved upon us the preaching of the cross; in the East, as well as in the West; in the North, as well as in the South: "all nations" is the boundary line—so comprehensive, as to exclude none—so unlimited as to include *all*—but "beginning at Jerusalem," defines the commencement, and tells us the starting point. Home is to be *first* in our sympathies—*first* in our efforts—*first* in our prayers. Destitution may be around our dwelling calling loudly for aid, but the destitution of home comes first. The men of Macedonia, with clasped hands and earnest entreaty, may plead "Come over and help us;" but the claims of those of our own household are pre-eminent. "No man careth for my soul," may be the agonizing shriek of many a neglected spirit; but a father must close his ear to that cry until he has fulfilled his commission at home. These remarks are suggested to us, because in the line of duty to which the Christian is called—and indeed pledged; *Home* lies first. Here is his chief responsibility, his highest claim, the sphere for his first and earliest endeavours—the spot where he is to commence cultivating the great field of christian enterprise. It will never do to neglect home for abroad—to instruct in the Sabbath School and impart no teaching to our own families—to keep the vineyards of others and neglect our own.

Religious instruction is, therefore, a most important feature of religious duty. This applies almost exclusively to the younger members of a family. Early years are golden hours. When the mind is tender, it is most susceptible. Youth is the only period of giving a sound education. A man of forty or fifty who has never been taught to read, will never become learned—let the hours of childhood pass without instruction, and man is unfitted for life and always unwilling to learn. Boys and not men—girls and not women, are sent to school. The analogy between secular and religious instruction is very close;—childhood and youth are the best seasons for both,—the period when the advantages of secular knowledge can be obtained, and the great principles of religious truth impressed.

The question naturally arises when should children *first* be religiously instructed. Let the following deeply affecting instances act as replies. A minister of Christ passing down the streets of one of our villages, heard a child of only four years of age, utter an oath. “Who taught you to say so wicked a word?” was his enquiry. The artless reply—“My father says it,” told the startling truth, that the father was teaching his child the first lesson in blasphemy. Look at another, the very reverse of the former. “Father,” said a dying child, “I am going to Jesus, and what reason shall I tell him why you do not love him?”

The former tells how soon a child can learn evil. The latter, how early grace can take possession of the heart.

There is no limit except it be the limit of infant incapacity. Many even now doubt the possibility of early conversion, hence the very general neglect of religious instruction. As early as a child can be brought to understand, let religion form an important part of his early training. We know not how soon grace *may* take possession of the heart ; it is possible, we believe, that in the earlier years of childhood, regeneration *may* be effected : we have heard of early conversions, the word of truth speaks of them, and the history of the church attests their possibility. Parents ! are you familiar with your Bibles ? Do not forget that *Joseph* was a boy, when he honored God. *Samuel* was a child when he was called by the Lord. *Josiah* was only eight years old when he deserved a place and a name amongst the pious kings of ancient Israel ; and time would fail to tell of those whose names are handed down to us in the Word of Truth, as at an early period serving the Lord. *Timothy*, you will not forget was a believer in his boyhood, and a preacher of the everlasting gospel at so early an age, that many now-a-days would scarcely deem him old enough for church fellowship. In ‘Butler’s Lives of the *Saints*,’ you *may* find a multitude of cases. We

will extract just one or two suited to our purpose. Margaret, daughter of Bala, the pious Hungarian king, when but three years old gave evidence of love to Jesus. Agnes was only thirteen years of age when beheaded for Christ. You may reply “Impossible!” Brethren,—“With God *all things* are possible.” The earlier then the better. As soon as the tongue can lisp its accents—tell of Jesus: the tale would be sweet, and interesting to the tender mind. When first the heart can feel, tell of sin and its consequences, and speak of Jesus’ sacrifice, and a Saviour’s prayers; and depend upon it—“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.”

Alas! and we record it with grief, the seed-time is too often neglected. Children for the most part are left to themselves to pick up the fragments, and to glean information either through the medium of passing conversation, in which, however, they are never expected to take a part; from the Sunday School often rendered tedious and uninteresting—or from the Pulpit, to the minds of most children the dullest instructor.* Now religious instruction

* The subject of special religious services for children is well worthy the attention of the church; it is very evident that the mode of Pulpit-teaching suited to the adult is ill adapted to the child. Hence, there is a constant restlessness—the mind is uninterested and, consequently, uninstructed—the language and the illustrations are alike beyond their powers of thought. Ask a child to give an account of any one sermon it may have heard and it will be most meagre, if there is any recollection at all. While a special service, in which the whole manner, style, illustration, and language, should be brought down to the child’s mind, would not fail to be both instructive and interesting.

is almost exclusively devolved upon parents:—they may provide teachers and preceptors, but their attention is occupied with the daily routine of secular instruction. Sabbath Schools,—one of the ornaments of the church, and often a fruitful source of good, frequently fail. The efforts of the teacher can never supersede parental obligation. The responsibility cannot be shifted. With every child God says, “Take this child and nurse it for Me.” And it must not be “put out,” to be spiritually nursed and trained. Who is most likely to feel a deep interest in its spiritual welfare? None but parents. To none upon earth then can they delegate the spiritual charge of their offspring. Upon whose heart will the deep and bitter anguish fall, if that child should be irreligious? It will fall heavily and sadly upon the soul of the neglectful mother, or careless father.

In training the mind, it must never be forgotten that it holds no neutral state. It is already sown, “the enemy hath done this,” and those germs of wrong will rise and spread in the most luxuriant manner. The parent is therefore destined to a two-fold task; to weed as well as to plant. It is very evident then that the earlier the lesson, the more efficient will be the instruction. The present age affords many facilities for this. It possesses its infant schools and lessons, and the church sensible *wherein lies its strength*, is beginning the

work of infant Sabbath School Teaching. Let not parents be behind hand in this matter, but with an energy commensurate with its importance, and a zeal equal to the high and noble results to be expected—train the first years of childhood, and implant the mind with the principles of evangelical truth. It may appear encompassed with difficulties, but these difficulties will vanish. You may have sacrifices to make in your own enjoyment, and deny yourselves of some privileges. Be ready to make those sacrifices, and practice that self denial. The reward will be great indeed. In this world you must toil ; and here unfortunately is the great defect in the christianity of the present day. Effort declines—the claims of the world have become irksome. Zeal has lost its energy. Do not forget we beseech you, that it is spiritually true, as well as correct in worldly matters, that “it is the hand of the diligent that maketh rich.” No excellence is ever attained without diligence. No reward can be expected without fidelity. The slumberer and the slothful will never reap a harvest ; they may wish—but all their wishes will be vain. If, as parents, we would have the great reward of seeing our children treading the narrow way, which leads to life, we must guide them in their tenderest years, and watch over them when their minds are like the sapling—can be diverted which way we will—there must be

energy, diligence, and perseverance, before there is success.

While urging the duty of religious instruction we are often met with the answer, that there is a natural aversion to religion in the mind of childhood ; this we are inclined to doubt, if it has possessed proper training. The great source of this aversion is, that for the most part religious instruction is clad with sadness, and invested with gloom ; and the mind becomes prepossessed with a dislike to its truths. The evil lies here :—instead of treating children as children, they are taught as if they were men, and because they cannot understand the phrases so commonly used in the set forms of language too often employed, they imbibe a dislike to every thing that wears the semblance of religion. The most suitable form of instruction should be seized ; the mode of teaching should be adapted to the child : it may be through the use of a toy, or of a picture book, or some other simple means. Dr. Chalmers, a man equalled by few and surpassed by none, confesses in his 'Daily Scripture Meditations,' that he imbibed a reverence for the Bible from the employment of pictures to illustrate the scenes. We will not hear that the religion of Jesus fails to interest, or is weak to amuse. It possesses charms of the highest order : it delights as well as instructs : it awakes *a thrilling interest*, and produces a lasting impres-

sion. The writer has seen an infant class of fifty children, from three to five years of age, hang with breathless attention upon the tale of a Saviour's love—a Saviour's suffering—and a Saviour's home; yielding a striking attestation to the fact that religion can interest the infant as well as instruct the adult; and when once the mind becomes possessed with the truths of the Gospel, who will undertake to tell the glorious result.

We speak thus at length, because, while it is a subject important above all conception, it is one sadly neglected. Facts are presented to us in the history of the church, so mournful as to excite our sympathy and awaken our solicitude. How often do we hear of error, and even the most flagrant forms of evil among the children of the godly; even the families of the ministers of the Cross are not exempt. “It is, we fear, a fact, that the children of the ministry rarely seek and find the God of their fathers in early life. How comes this to pass? It is not confined to sect or party, but is almost co-extensive with the ministry itself. It is not confined to modern times, for ‘the sons of Eli were wicked men, they knew not the Lord.’ So frequent is the occurrence of this sore evil, that we have heard it said again and again, ‘that God permitted ministers to be tried in their families, in order that they might be kept

humble.' *Not so!* ** We will not conceal our impressions. We believe that if parents were prayerfully, faithfully, and earnestly to "Train their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ;" there would be fewer sorrows in domestic life, fewer defections among the children of the godly, while the church in its beauty, its glorious success, would yield a fulfilment to the prophetic announcement—"Instead of the fathers shall be the children."

Domestic Religion involves the exercise of Righteous Discipline.—By discipline, we mean the adoption of restraint, the exercise of authority, both in the inculcation of good, and in the checking of evil. With the maxim, "Spare the rod and spoil the child," you are familiar ; wholesome discipline is the very basis of society, and the very framework with which it is supported. An army without discipline, would be an army of disorderlies. A nation without an enforced law, would present only a scene of internal discord. And no establishment, whether civil or religious, should be without its enactments and motives for their enforcement. Every family, also should be characterised by order : it should possess an authority, and that authority should derive its power from the beauty of consistency.

* "The Sunday School," sp. 47., by Louisa Davids ; one of the best works ever dedicated to the service of Christ.

It is not our intention to enlarge upon this point, we only suggest its necessity ; but we must say, there is no single principle of Domestic Religion which requires so much of the “ wisdom which cometh from above,” as the exercise of a righteous discipline. We can lay down no rules, and can enter into no particulars. This teaching must come from God—the only guide must be his word. Children vary so in disposition and natural temperament, that the form suited for the one would be ill-adapted for the other ; the mode of discipline will have to assume almost as many forms of proceeding as there are children to educate. We can, however, suggest some *general* principles of conduct. We need ~~not~~ say, that there should be tenderness to win the heart and engage the affections—firmness, sometimes amounting to severity, without a revolting harshness—wisdom, that will be blind to many defects, yet observant of all ; deep attention to the ruling passions of the mind, combined with the attempt to conceal, if possible, their discovery, while you counteract their influence. Nature and religion have invested us with a kind of sovereign authority over our children. Use that authority well and wisely—without partiality, for nothing is so injurious to noble feeling as favoritism ; with unity of purpose and oneness of effort, for in the administration of discipline, the parents ought and

must be united if they desire the accomplishment of their purpose.

But we beg you to regard as an object of the deepest seriousness in all your discipline, to get the *principle of obedience*. Work upon the mind rather than the body—discipline the will, rather than inflict corporeal punishment. The rod should be resorted to only in extreme cases. It more frequently hardens than subdues. There are softer methods, more congenial and suited to the circumstances of childhood: while the severe would fail, the tender would impress. We are told that a child was in the habit of telling falsehoods;—harsh measures of reproof were adopted, they failed to affect the heart: she still indulged in the crime, and the habit became more deeply rooted. Another plan was resorted to; the mother, with tearful eyes and a heavy heart, with feelings better conceived than described, led the child to the Saviour's foot-stool—kneeled with her at his throne—with a broken spirit she pleaded for her child—her language was scarcely audible amid the heavy sobs which broke from her still heavier breast;—the child was melted, her heart became susceptible of impression—she forsook the habit; and she lives to tell the tale and attest the truth, that severity is not so potent as kindness, and tenderness more melting than harshness.

Amongst our poorer brethren we fear that harsh-

ness is the law, and kindness the exception ; from a lack of those privileges with which others are favored—without instruction themselves, and possessing no knowledge of human nature—enhanced by the struggles of poverty and the toil of providing the bread which perisheth, their children are neglected ; the very effort of worldly provision makes them a burden, and they are considered rather as increasing their difficulties than adding to their pleasures. With such we sympathise ; they are not fit objects for scorn, but pity. No one can have witnessed the care devolving upon those who are less favored in their circumstances, without the most oppressive feelings. The poor demand our solicitude and claim our care ; the good which may be effected here is incalculable. The distinctions of Society prevent too frequently the wealthy from aiding the poor *as friends*. Let the feeling arising from these distinctions melt away—by counsel and advice, by sympathy and kindness, let our wealthier female friends, imitating the conduct of their Master, imbibing his humility, give that instruction which even experience seems unable to teach. The poor members of our churches have often to weep alone over their domestic cares ; unsoothed amid maternal grief—untaught in those little arts which might render life more happy.*

* Permit us to direct your attention to a little monthly periodical entitled, the "Mother's Friend," than which we have not seen one so admirably adapted to that class of individuals it proposes to teach.

Let maternal societies be brought into full operation: at such meetings a kindred feeling springs up between those whom providence has "made to differ.". These long neglected means of improvement should be established in every congregation, and would become inestimable blessings to every church.

Domestic piety involves the energy of Domestic consistency. Here depend upon it is the great source of good and evil. The habits of the parents soon, very soon affect the child. Many a child has been taught its first lesson of irreligion from its father; and there are not a few of the sons of pious parents, who have learned to be careless about religion, from discerning a want of earnestness in others. It is not so much what we *say*, as what we *do*. It is what we *are*, more than what we *command*. Children are apt scholars when things are presented before their attention to imitate, while they will bestow learners when they are called upon merely to listen to theory. We can form no conception of the power of example; we may neglect to sow the seed, by precept or instruction, but we are perpetually affecting the heart, by the influence of example. There is a natural propensity to imitation in the child, and this is heightened by the strong attachment, and high opinion existing in so near a relation. "My *father*," said a boy, "cannot do wrong;" and

there are few of us who, in our childhood, did not possess the same feeling. What a potent thing is example! what an overwhelming influence does consistency possess! One single blemish will weaken a thousand lessons. Parents! you are every thing to your children; your influence over them is deeply important; and while, therefore, we beg you to resort to persevering instruction and righteous discipline, let them both be sanctioned and rendered effective by Domestic Consistency.

But while instruction and discipline pertain only to the family circle in which you move, consistency of deportment relates to every one with whom you may be brought into contact; *children, servants, and friends*, are all involved in this; our actions tell in a wide circle—influence many minds—and either beneficially or disastrously affect many hearts. That was a startling question proposed by the prophet to King Hezekiah, “What have they seen in thine house?” He had been sick and was near to death. His earnest prayer for lengthened life was heard, and fifteen years were added to his earthly existence. This striking interposition of God, enhanced in its importance by the mysterious sign with which it was attested, drew forth the astonishment of neighbouring princes. Bero-dach-Baladin, the King of Babylon, sent ambassadors to congratulate him on his recovery. The

pride of Hezekiah was excited by this mark of homage, so that instead of telling these Babylonians of God's kindness, which should have been the first impulse of a grateful heart, he shewed them the glittering jewellery which emblazoned his palace, and the glorious splendour of his riches and wealth. Isaiah rebukes him: in a gentle tone he asks the monarch, "What have they seen in *thine* house?" Suppose that question addressed to the Church Member in his own Home, what would be the response? Could our children attest the sincerity of our profession; could our servants read in our conduct an earnest religion; could our friends, either intimate or remote, discern that we regarded religion as "the one thing needful,"—the word of truth, as the "pearl of great price."

Permit us then to beg your serious and practical attention to the following elements of family religion:—

1st. We invite you to *the scrupulous discharge of Domestic devotion.* There is no express *precept* for family prayer in the Word of Truth. But it appears to be one of those requirements which arise spontaneously, and need no bidding. It is so natural, so obvious—parental responsibility, parental affection, parental solicitude, all urge it. It is however true that we find traces of family religion in the history of the word of truth. "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord;" was

the noble determination of Joshua ; it indicates his view of Domestic Piety. We are told that in the hour of great distress ; when Jerusalem became “a cup of trembling” to herself, and “a burdensome stone” unto all people, that her inhabitants put on sackcloth and mourned ; but a distinctive feature of that mourning is declared in Zech. xii, 12,—it was a family mourning. “ And the land shall mourn every family apart ; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart ; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart ; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart ; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart ; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.” Household or family religion is traceable in our Lord’s time, and in the days of the apostles. In every house, night and morning, the Word of Truth should be read, and the offering of prayer should be heard.—“ They,” says Matthew Henry, “ who daily pray in their houses, do well : they that not only pray but read the Scriptures, do better ; but they do best of all, who not only pray and read the Scriptures, but sing also.” Another writer tells us, that “ family prayer should be performed with great punctuality, constancy, and seriousness. It should not be performed so late in the evening that the family are more fit for sleep than devotion : nor so late in the morning,

as for business to interrupt it; it should ever be conducted with the most solemn devotion, and never rendered tedious by extreme length. It should be very simple, and have especial reference to children and servants." To these remarks we need add nothing. It should be a pleasing exercise rather than a dull formality. A few verses read in a lively strain, a hymn—for children are enlivened by every thing that partakes of the character of poetry—they are fond of imagery, you can reach them better by a metaphor than a direct truth; and a brief but reverential and solemn prayer, will not be tedious. But when children, contrary to their very nature, are called upon for some twenty minutes or half an hour, to retain their body in one posture, to listen to some lengthened comment which they do not comprehend, and to mingle in a service the very dullest which can be conceived, who can wonder that at an early age, they misapprehend religion, and clothe it in the dark vestments of sadness and gloom.—Brethren, what have they seen in thine house? Is there an altar upon which you offer the sacrifice of prayer and praise? If not! with all the earnestness of which we are susceptible, we beg you to begin. We warn you, that your non-observance of an obvious duty may bring in its train a long list of evils; in one word, your irreligion may prove *your children's* damnation. Let your feelings be

aroused,—give effect to our admonition. How many opportunities of good have been lost! Do you remember “that time when God visited your family with a heavy stroke, they were thoughtful for a season, but there was no prayer in your house to give an heavenly direction to that thoughtfulness, and it soon died away. That evening when they came home from the House of Prayer so serious, if you had been an earnest father or mother, you would have taken your boy aside, and spoken tenderly to him, and asked what his pastor had been telling him ; and you would have prayed with him, and tried to deepen the impression. But your children came in from the House of God, and found no altar in their father’s house. Their hearts were softened, but your worldliness soon hardened them. The seed of the kingdom was just springing in their souls, and by this time might have been a rich harvest of salvation ; but in the atmosphere of your ungodly house, the tender blade withered instantly. Your idle talk, your frivolity, your Sunday visitors, your prayerless evening, ruined all. Your children were coming to Christ, and you suffered them not. And you wil not need to hinder them long. The carnal mind is enmity against God: but no enmity so deep as theirs who were almost reconciled and then drew back.”* By the value of their precious souls!—by the great and overwhelming joy attendant upon their con-

* “The Church in the House,” by Hamilton.

version—by the deep and bitter pang which follows their departure from evil—for *your* sake ! for *their* sakes—for the sake of their *companions and friends*—we beg, we entreat you, to listen to our exhortation, scrupulously to discharge all the duties of Domestic devotion.

But, perhaps you respond we cannot pray, we have never been accustomed to the act, and we feel so much difficulty in its commencement. This is the case with many, even of those who have identified themselves with the church of Jesus. We are not fond of forms of prayer—except in cases where extemporaneous prayer is not possible. Whatever may be thought as to their adaptation to public assemblies, they are not suited for the perpetually varying circumstances of a family ; we regard them as ill fitted for the House of God, however beautiful they may be. With all our admiration for the thrilling beauty, reverential expression, and deep pathos of the Liturgy of the Episcopal Church,—and we will yield to none in this opinion—we think it does not meet the circumstances of our congregations—it too frequently declines into a formality, and we feel the same where forms are used at family worship ; but let them be employed rather than neglect the duty of domestic devotion. Use the help if you cannot pray without its aid.*

* To put this practically into effect, we would recommend “Fletcher’s Family Devotion,” or “Morison’s Prayers,” as well suited for the emergency.

2ndly. Let your religious instruction be of that kind which shall invite rather than repel ; which shall interest rather than offend. We should more seldom hear the oft repeated assertion that religion is distasteful to children, if the instruction given was of that kind, and administered in that form which would make it even amusing. Children must be treated as children ; their exuberant feelings should not be frowned upon but controlled ; they may possess and manifest mirth and joy,—religion frowns upon neither ; it rather smiles upon the innocent amusements of youth and childhood. Let children be taught as children—spoken to as children,—fed, intellectually fed as children* It must not be concealed upon this subject, that much devolves upon the mother. No precise rule can define the limits, but as a general principle it may be regarded that example belongs most to the father, and precept to the mother. The one struggling amid the toils of life to provide the bread that perisheth, and possessing but little opportunity for direct precept, except on the Sabbath,

* A lady whose children are always happy when referring to religion, adopted the following reasonable plan for impressing religious truth upon the minds of her children. She procured toys, and pictures, and puzzles, illustrative of Bible lessons, these were never used but on the Sabbath-day ; they were, therefore, sacred symbols. The Noah's Ark, and other toys, did more to interest their mind in the Bible, than all the lessons which a cold and lifeless theory would inculcate. For this purpose, the letter-box of the Sunday School Union is admirably adapted. Every School and, if possible, every family should be in possession of its aid.

when a stern and urgent necessity is laid upon him. And here again let us repeat the sentiment that it will not do to neglect home, while we care for others. We cannot conceal our feelings on the inconsistency of a parent neglecting his own children, to take charge of others in a Sabbath School. If time can be so economised as to render both possible, all is very well ; but home must not be neglected, to cultivate the vineyards of others.

3rdly. Be guarded in the expression of every word, and the performance of every action. Here is your stronghold. Let consistency be violated, and you peril their souls. Depend upon it, all that we say may be counteracted by the influence which our actions will exert, and all will be met with the question—"Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself."

4thly. By your own devotional feeling, give effect to the ministry of your Pastor, and kindle a warm and enthusiastic attachment to the Church of Christ. The contrary is too often the case : the minister is sometimes censured, and the church often blamed before those who as yet have no definite idea of the duties of the one, or the excellencies of the other. Weaknesses are magnified— inconsistencies are exaggerated—doctrinal defection is declared—the mind of the child is injured—disrespect soon engenders disgust, and who can *wonder that the addresses of the pulpit are utterly*

disregarded, and the work of the ministry disesteemed. The perfect peurility of telling before children and dependants all that occurs to mar the beauty of Christ's church is pitiable. From servants and children defects should be concealed—excellencies told. The proceedings of our church meetings form too generally matter of table discussion and family talk. Every thing that will generate disgust is told, while that which would excite esteem is kept back. On this subject we cannot be too earnest. Parents be wise—masters be dignified—no communion is so pure as to be spotless—no church so free from stains as to be perfect. We do not plead for a morbid sensibility which should never speak of the evil, or refer to the wrong ; ills that are to be remedied are better spoken out, but never as springing from captiousness or caprice. Detract not from the influence of your Pastor ! Teach your children and servants to look up to him for guidance, and " esteem him very highly in love, for his work's sake." Let the church of the Redeemer be regarded as a sacred enclosure, to be cherished and loved, supported by your liberality, and sustained by your prayers.

5thly. Let all your endeavours receive their impulse from your personal piety. Your own heart is the fountain. As that is rich in grace, the stream will be rich in success. As you are pious, you will

in that proportion exert an influence for good. There is no relation so tender as those of parents and children. Let the former gaze upon the latter with the heavings of a tender and affectionate heart. Think of their souls. Think of their rapid approach to immortality, and plead for them at that throne, whence descend the richest blessings and costliest gifts—a father's prayers are sacred—a mother's tears are costly in the sight of Heaven; a father's example is potent for good—a mother's influence is never lost. Beloved brethren, suffer the word of exhortation—we plead with you for *yours*. We are urgent in our appeal, for the circumstances of the age demand it. We feel almost as if we were speaking from the trembling walls of a declining church. The homes of the saints are the fountains of her increase; let them become the nurseries for the church—the preparatives for communion—the training ground for Heaven—and the schools for immortal blessedness.

Children are an heritage of the Lord Neglect then not to bring to bear upon their welfare all your efforts; let your example be the example of the brightest consistency. Spurn not our exhortation; at home—act the Christian. Forget not that “actions speak louder than words;” and conduct is vastly more potent than precept. Learn how strong, from the following lesson:—A mother *was teaching her little boy to pray; she impressed*

upon its mind, as well as it could receive them, solemn ideas of God, and the duty as well as the privilege of prayer. With all the restlessness yet observance of childhood, the boy said, "Mother, when I am a man, I shall not want to pray." "Why?" said the astonished mother;—"Because father never does;" was the reply. Natural enough that the child should think so—strange were it otherwise. O, fathers, "Ponder the path of your feet:" watch all your actions. For good or for evil—for weal or for woe, they are all producing an influence. We beg, we entreat you, "Let your light so shine before *them* that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in Heaven."

Mothers! to you we look most anxiously. Do you not know that the wise man has said, "A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." What higher motive can you have—what greater inducement—they are near your heart—you wish them well. Let your prayers ascend and your efforts be made. A mother's prayers!—they are sacred—valuable beyond all conception—their influence is never lost. How many a wanderer has been reclaimed by them; they have followed him wherever he has gone—the richest heir-loom, the most costly legacy. In one of the states of North America, the son of a pious mother was convicted of crime. In his confinement for the offence, he

was visited by a member of the Society of Friends, who tried by his kind and winning manner to gain his affection and confidence. All was in vain ;—every effort unsuccessful. With a noble perseverance he plied him with every remonstrance ; with his bible in his hand, he entered the prisoner's cell one evening just after he had been released from toil. He began to read Psalm li. The prisoner turned his back as usual, and tried to seem indifferent to what he read. When the warden had done reading, he said, "Friend K—, how old art thou ?" After a sudden pause, he replied, sur-lily—"Thirty-five." "Thy parents are dead ; are they not ?" "Yes." "They died when thou wast young ?" "Yes." "Dost thou remember thy father ?" "No." "Dost thou remember thy *mother* ?" In a soft and tremulous voice he replied, "Yes, I remember my mother." The warden saw that there was one chord of feeling still alive, that he had then touched that chord, and it vibrated, and he continued,—"How old wast thou when thy mother died ?" The prisoner raised his eyes, and looked the warden in the face, and the tear-drops started as he replied, "I was eight years and five months old when she died." The warden resumed—"Was thy mother a pious woman ?" "Oh, yes—my mother was a godly, pious woman, and she is now in heaven ?" "Didst thou ever *hear thy mother pray* ?" "Yes, she prayed every

night and morning, and she taught me to kneel by her side, and to pray also. Oh, *that mother's prayers!*"

Here the prisoner burst into tears—the pious quaker wept also; they mingled their tears and their prayers. The prisoner seemed melted into contrition; he asked the warden's forgiveness, and the forgiveness of his God. From that time he manifested an entire change in conduct and feeling. He seemed humble, submissive, and penitent. After some months, the governor of the state was petitioned, and the prisoner was released. He had now become a new man: he removed to a distant part of the country, joined the church, and is now an honest man and a decided Christian.

Oh! the influence of religious parents. Mothers fathers, suffer the word of exhortation! Be earnest! and let your children see your sincerity. Toil; no effort will be mispent. Pray; be ready to make sacrifices. Your influence will survive you. When the earth mound swells over your grave, your prayers may be heard; the remembrance of your piety may have a hallowed effect. Think of the glorious and blissful result—*a family in Heaven*. What a thrilling thought! The ocean of life crossed—its cares and anxieties left behind—its last tear shed—its last sigh heaved—its last trial endured—to meet without a solitary exception, in the "mansions of our Father's House." Some

are there. This little book may fall into the hands of the bereaved—a sainted mother or father—a brother or sister—*safe in Heaven*. Follow them, who through faith and patience, have inherited the promises. See to it that it be your desire to obtain a fitting preparation for that world *where they are*. Then, how happy will be the meeting—how thrilling the joy!

Father, watching o'er thy child
 Mother, filled with anxious care ;
 Is the soil with sin defiled,
 Sow the seed, and sow with prayer.

Though, through many an anxious year
 Neither fruit nor flower appear ;
 Yet refrain not in despair
 Though it sleep, the seed is there.

Though thou live not it shall grow
 Certainly and faithfully,
 Parent, friend, the soil prepare
 Sow the Seed,—*but sow with prayer.*

EDMESTON.

Finis.



